

Three years ago I decided to get an iPhone. I searched around for plans first before I actually made the phone purchase. AT&T's cheapest iPhone plan (and the only plan that was available for purchase were iPhone plans and only iPhone plans) was \$60 per month loaded with worthless minutes that I would never use enough to make the plan cost effective. There was no simple data plan offered. T-Mobile on the other hand not only had a data plan for smartphones, it was also much cheaper than anything AT&T offered. This is not the only instance of me going with T-Mobile over AT&T however.

I had been using as my main mobile number a prepaid plan bought from Cingular Wireless. I had gotten this plan because they were the cheapest ones around at the time. For \$100 I could have my number for a full year while being charged \$.25 per minute. While I was on with Cingular and later AT&T, I experienced drops while standing perfectly still in some areas if I could ever get connected to the network. During times from 5-7 PM, connection was nearly impossible. Years later I came across T-Mobile's prepaid plans which offered rates as low as \$.10 per minute on \$100. Not only was this a much better deal for me because I do not talk much, but I have never gotten a call dropped in the same area at the same time with T-Mobile.

So now with smartphones becoming more prevalent, I see AT&T with their overage plans and it worries me. Going a kilobyte over your 2 gigabyte monthly allotment means an extra \$10 hit. You would be paying almost a 5 GB rate using barely over 2. On T-Mobile, going over your allotment means you get throttled down until the next billing cycle starts. I never considered AT&T for a smartphone simply because they would never offer the plan I wanted, and they would charge a disproportionate amount in data charge overages that I find excessive and unnecessary. I like the fact that I can buy my phone and then go to a carrier for a plan instead of the other way around.

Speaking of which, with the smartphones themselves, AT&T has just now decided to embrace the Android platform a little more, but their phone selections are locked down because AT&T wants their phones limited. This means that these phones cannot as of now without some help use the Amazon Android Appstore. I fear that a GSM monopoly means that phone innovations would be stifled on the GSM end because there would be only one national carrier where these phones could be used.

The loss of T-Mobile also means that should I ever decide to upgrade my plan or my phone in the future and I do not like what plans the combined company offered, I would be forced to buy a new phone going with Verizon Wireless or Sprint Nextel because their phones use a different cellular radio technology. AT&T has said that they would be using T-Mobile's frequency range for their next level wireless broadband rollout. This means that millions of high end devices would become instantly useless.

Please do not accept AT&T's line about there being other budget carriers available should they be allowed to absorb T-Mobile. US Cellular does not operate in my area. Clear does not operate in my area. Virgin and Boost do not operate well in my area and their call quality is not good. All four operators I listed also run on incompatible cellular radio technology meaning I would be forced to buy a new phone. T-Mobile is the only reason I believe that AT&T has as low rates as it does right now along with finally offering a data only plan. T-Mobile being gone means AT&T no longer has any real incentive not to raise its rates. T-Mobile checks AT&T and gives consumers an opportunity to buy an unrestricted GSM phone and allows disgruntled AT&T customers to take their phones to another carrier without being forced to purchase new equipment.